

HORSEMANSHIP—A POPULAR FAD.

By Frank A. Munsey.



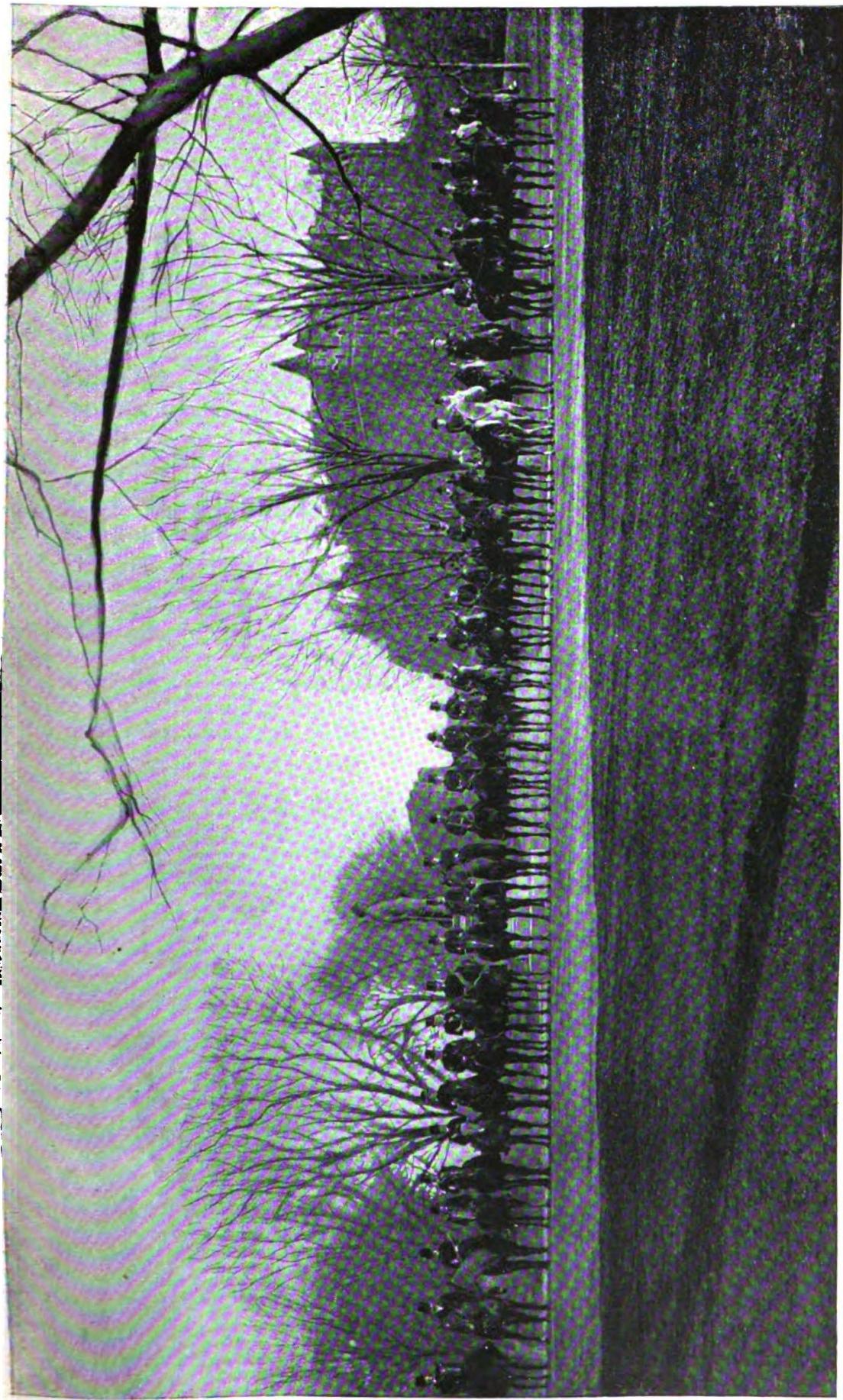
HEALTHFUL outdoor sports and exercises have in the last few years grown to a remarkable vogue and popularity in this country. Their cultivation has indeed been one of the most notable social developments of the past quarter of a century. England has led the world in the various branches of athletics, and the general participation in them by her people has done much to make the English race distinguished among nations for the best standard of physical development.

But already we are fairly dividing the honors with her. In yachting we have built the boats and reared the sailors that have outsailed, time and again, the best yachts England has ever produced. American riflemen and American oarsmen have held their own against the best talent of England. Even in cricket, their great national game, picked

teams of Englishmen have been met and vanquished by transatlantic invaders. Of running, walking and bicycling records America holds her share, and of those for short distances she has the great majority. In high jumping, throwing the hammer and putting the weight, American athletes are in the lead. Tennis and polo are newer games here than in England, but our standards in them are of the highest. Baseball is peculiarly our own, and it has been developed to a wonderful degree of scientific skill reached by no other outdoor sport.

"The pleasure of exercise," says Dr. Holmes, "is due first to a purely physical impression, and secondly to a sense of power in action. The first source of pleasure varies, of course, with our condition, and the state of the surrounding circumstances; the second with the amount and kind of power, and the extent and kind of action. In all forms of active exercise there are three powers simultaneously in action—the will, the muscles and the intellect. Each of these predominates in different kinds of exercise." The Autocrat discusses the relative merits of walking, riding and rowing, concluding with the statement that rowing "is the nearest approach to flying that man has ever made or perhaps ever will make. As the hawk sails without flapping his pinions, so you drift with the tide, when you will, in the most luxurious form of locomotion indulged to an embodied spirit. You can row easily and gently all day, and you can row yourself blind and black in the face in ten minutes, just as you like. It is in the boat, then, that man finds the largest extension of his volitional and muscular existence."

In a later edition of the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," from which



ON PARADE—A REPRESENTATIVE CLASS OF ONE OF NEW YORK'S RIDING SCHOOLS.



THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD CAN RIDE AS WELL AS DANCE.

the foregoing quotation is made, Dr. Holmes adds in a foot note: "Since the days when this was written, the bicycle has appeared as the rival of the wherry. The boat flies like a sea bird with its long, narrow, outstretched pinions; the bicycle rider, like feathered Mercury with his wings on his feet."

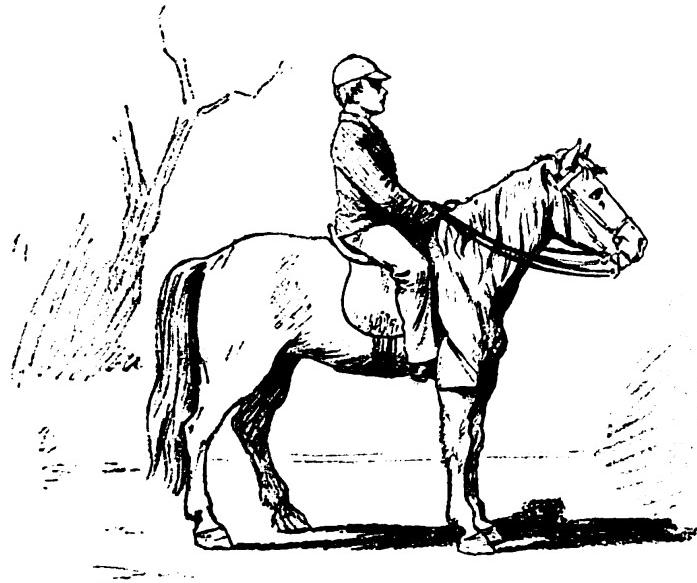
These are eloquent tributes to boating and to cycling, and well deserved they are; but after all, for refined sport in its highest development one must turn to that most exhilarating of all pleasures—horse-back riding. That this view is held by those whose income is sufficient to warrant the indulgence of their tastes is evidenced by the enormous growth in horsemanship in America within the last few years. It is hardly too much to say that it is now regarded as quite as important in a social sense for young men and young women to be proficient in riding as in dancing. Rowing, yachting, swimming, and tennis, it is true, share its popularity in the midsummer months, but riding is an all the year round sport—a sport that in the cool months of spring and fall, and the colder months of winter, has no rival among all the forms of outdoor exercise. And, indeed, I know of no other pleasure on a brisk, cool day that gives the physical invigoration, the keen enjoyment, and the ruddy

glow to be obtained from a gallop in the park. But to get the fullest pleasure the rider must be well mounted and well trained in his art. He should have his own horse—an animal with light, springy action and graceful movement, one that pleases the eye, too, for pleasure comes not alone from a sense of exercise. Furthermore, the rider and his horse should be on good terms. The latter, if an animal of good temper and intelligence, is sure to do his part well when the proper overtures are made to him—when he is treated kindly and wisely, and is made to understand clearly what he is expected to do. With such an understanding between rider and horse each enters into the sport with spirit and zest, with a mutual confidence and mutual desire for an exhilarating dash that rewards each alike with—as Dr. Holmes says of boating—"the most luxurious form of locomotion indulged to an embodied spirit."

This degree of pleasure is not within the compass of the novice—not within the grasp of the man of



THE PROPRIETOR OF A NEW YORK ACADEMY.



YOUNG AMERICA ON HIS PONY.

bad temper and coarse mental composition, who hasn't the confidence and love of his horse—not within the bounds of possibility to him who rides a school horse, which is, as a rule, little more than a hack—a horse in appearance, to be sure, but not a horse in the finer instincts and finer feelings of the carefully bred and well cared for animal.

The school horse, which is ridden by riders of all grades, by men of varying moods and widely different tempers, is sometimes treated kindly, but more frequently abused, and is too often pushed to the point of exhaustion—such a horse soon loses its spirit, and forgetting its better nature settles down into a plodding, unintelligent machine.

To become an expert oarsman one must give months, even years, to practice. This holds true of all sports in which one wishes to excel, and yet the average man evidently thinks, from the assurance he displays in sallying forth to ride, that he can without any training mount a horse and forthwith become a perfect horseman, when the only

equipment he has for the undertaking consists of his two legs which enable him to sit astride the saddle. But this does not constitute riding in its true sense. That is an accomplishment to be acquired only by the most painstaking training and long practice. When one sees the men—and women too, for that matter—who, having had no training and possessing no knowledge of the horse, yet insist upon attempting to ride, he is reminded forcibly of the old adage that every man

thinks he can run a newspaper or keep a hotel. So it is with horsemanship. If the novices who venture into Central Park on horseback and out upon the road could see themselves as the true horseman sees them, they would perhaps conclude that riding is an accomplishment in which they are wofully deficient.

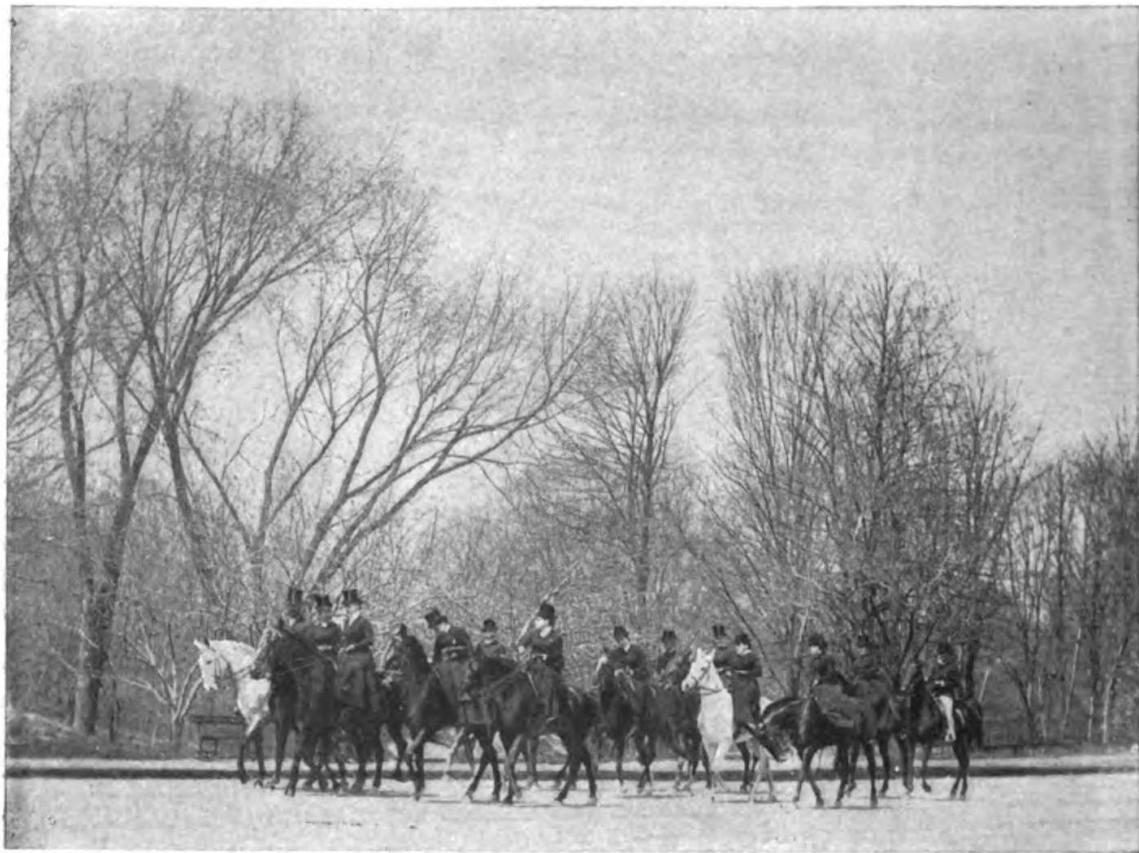
But the ridiculous features in the riding of the novice are of little importance as compared with the danger to the rider and a greater



AN EASY TROT.

danger to others, for it is the horse of the novice, for the most part, that makes riding on the Central Park bridle path, or any crowded thoroughfare, so hazardous. Anything that gains the stamp of social approbation is sure to be taken up by a

less than half a dozen large training schools and several riding clubs, of which many of the best citizens of the city are members. The work of the training schools—and all of them are kept busy—includes individual instruction during the day and class



SOCIETY IN THE SADDLE—A RIDING ACADEMY CLASS.

veritable army of would-be fashionables. This latter set, which in a city like New York is a numerous one, moved by an intense eagerness to "do the correct thing," immediately takes it up and makes a "fad" of it, regardless of such considerations as fitness or lack of fitness for the thing attempted. But fortunately for horsemanship this superficial class does not constitute the great body of riders in the metropolis. Horsemanship has taken too firm a hold of the intelligent and wealthy portion of the community, who as a rule do things well, to be in danger of such declension. It has awakened an interest that has prompted the establishment of not

riding in the evening. A few years ago but one or two riding schools had been established in New York, and their recent increase shows how rapidly horsemanship has gained in popularity. The riding teachers, and each school has a number, are almost without exception drawn from the best European institutions of the kind. With such instructors the schools of New York are turning out as fine riders as the English or French academies. The number of enthusiastic equestrians and équestrionnes who own their own horses and ride with painstaking care to perfect themselves in the accomplishment, is growing larger every year. Class riding has become one of the

most enjoyable evening recreations of New York during the winter months. Every night in the week different classes fill the big riding academies and ride to the accompaniment of music. The classes are led by professors of the school, and

ages of the wealth and fashion of the city are to be seen on the East Drive, presents much the appearance of Rotten Row. This similarity has been greatly enhanced by the increased number of fine riders—men and women—who fly gayly along the



ANOTHER RIDING ACADEMY CLASS.

are put through many fancy figures, which are varied with plain riding, sometimes the gallop, sometimes the sitting trot and more frequently the rising trot. On special nights jumping and exhibition riding of the most difficult sort are given. There are galleries for spectators in all the schools, and these are usually filled by friends of those in the ring. Class riding in the Park is very popular, and during the spring and fall excursions into the country in the cool of the day, returning by moonlight, after dining at some suburban hostelry, are frequent and highly pleasurable to the participants.

Central Park, on a September afternoon, when the expensive equip-

bridle path that skirts the favorite drive.

Riding is almost universally commended by physicians, and their endorsement of its health giving qualities has certainly contributed to the firm hold it has upon a great and growing constituency. The passion for outdoor exercise that has so thoroughly taken possession of American men is shared fully by their young wives and sisters. It is doubtful if any other form of sport in the open air appeals to them with anything approaching the same force. They have not the physical strength necessary for rowing and the active games whose votaries are animated by the reckless enthusiasm exhibited, for instance, in the gentle game of



A MORNING RIDE IN THE COUNTRY.

football. But they can ride, and ride well, and with quite as keen enjoyment as their brothers. Another cause, perhaps, of the pastime's rapid growth in popularity among women lies in the fact of the wonderful improvement in riding habits. The old time habit, with its tremendous skirt, was an enormity—a thing to transform a handsome woman into a being so ill proportioned and so ungainly that it is a wonder she ever had the courage to disfigure herself with such an outrageous garb. But the habit of today is a thing of beauty and a joy forever—when the right girl

wears it. There is, perhaps, no costume in which a good figure appears to better advantage than in the latest style of snug fitting, short skirt habit.

If the art of more skillful tailors figures to any extent in luring fair woman into horsemanship, then much honor to the tailor, though he be, as tradition has it, but one ninth of a man. The fact that more women ride now than formerly is good enough reason why more men are at present enthusiastic riders; for where the girls are there shall the men be also.

HALLOWE'EN.

(October 31st.)

I.

At Hallowe'en, so calm and still,
All frisky spirits are astir;
The fairies haunt the vale and hill,
And witch-like elves meet to confer.

II.

But we can well keep free from those,
For by the fireside round about
Sweet rosy maids meet with their beaux
To spell their future fortune out.

III.

Chestnuts or walnuts, pair by pair,
Are put upon the living coals,
And if they lie contented there
They represent two happy souls.

IV.

Some eat an apple, while they stare
Within the telltale looking glass:
And as they eat and comb their hair
The fated face is sure to pass

V.

Before their eyes. Some pull the kale:
Some try the oats, or size the sack:
Some seek the rivulet in the vale,
Some hemp seed sow for answer back.

VI.

Ah, me! How many spells of old
To tell our fortunes I have seen;
No sweeter charm does memory hold,
Than those past hours of Hallowe'en.

